



GIFT OF  
DR. NELSON GLUECK

# MEMORIAL SERVICE

FOR

## ISRAEL BETTAN

Rabbi of Congregation B'nai Israel,

Virginia Street Temple

1912-1922

VIRGINIA STREET TEMPLE

Charleston, West Virginia

Sunday, Nov. 17, 1957

4:30 P.M.

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**ISRAEL  
BETTAN**

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## Order of Service

ORGAN PRELUDE (Idelsohn)

SHIVISI (Binder) ..... Choir

INVOCATION..... Rabbi Samuel Volkman

EL MOLE RACHAMIN (Binder)..... Choir

PSALM XXIII..... Read by Rabbi Samuel Volkman

PSALM XXIII (Idelsohn)..... Choir

LETTER FROM ISRAEL BETTAN TO SISTERHOOD..... Read by Mrs. Lake Brown,  
President of the  
Virginia Street Temple  
Sisterhood

LETTERS FROM NELSON GLUECK, JACOB PHILIP RUDIN, AND

MAURICE N. EISENDRATH..... Read by Mr. Sydney M. Kleeman,  
President of the  
Virginia Street Temple

ADDRESS ISRAEL BETTAN—AN APPRECIATION..... Rabbi Samuel Volkman

YISGADAL V'YISKADASH (Binder)..... Choir

KADDISH ..... Congregation

ADON OLOM..... Choir and Congregation

CONCLUDING BENEDICTION..... Rabbi Samuel Volkman

ORGAN POSTLUDE

### CHOIR

Mildred Clark ..... Soprano  
Emelie Knudson ..... Contralto  
Robert Howell ..... Tenor  
Alan Arthur ..... Baritone  
Grace Schmidt..... Organist and Director

Letter from Israel Bettan to Mrs. Lake Brown, President of the Virginia Street Temple, in acknowledgment of felicitations of the Sisterhood sent to him when he had received in the spring of 1957 an honorary degree from his alma mater, the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion. This letter was read by the recipient, Mrs. Lake Brown, at the Memorial Service.

May 28, 1957

I was very happy to get the greetings of the Virginia Street Temple Sisterhood. I am sensible of the high honor bestowed on me by my Alma Mater, but I am also delighted to know that my Charleston friends share in the joy of the occasion.

Honors are not to be spurned; but more precious than public tributes is the consciousness that one has dear friends whose interest in one's welfare is genuine and constant.

You refer to the fact that I helped organize the Sisterhood you represent. I am not inclined to take too much credit for what the Sisterhood has grown to be. But I have tender memories of the group of women that formed the nucleus of the present much larger body of members. You see my heart is still in the Charleston of forty-five years ago. Age has not dimmed my vision of former days, nor chilled my warm regard for those who have long passed from the present scene.

From the Temple Bulletin I get occasional glimpses of the present stature of the Sisterhood. It has become a mighty arm of the Temple. Its activities are numerous and well calculated to advance the cause for which we stand. May your efforts be crowned with success.

With many thanks for your message, and with warmest greetings,

Israel Bettan

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Letters from Dr. Nelson Glueck, President of the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion;

..... from Dr. Jacob Phillip Rudin, President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis;

..... from Dr. Maurice N. Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

These letters recognizing Israel Bettan's historic association with Congregation B'nai Israel (Virginia Street Temple) were read by the President of the Congregation, Sydney M. Kleeman.

November 12, 1957

I do not suppose that any other congregation in the entire structure of Reform Judaism knows as vividly and as personally as your congregation does what a grievous loss the movement has sustained in the death of Dr. Bettan. It was from your congregation that he came to our school as a professor. It was in your congregation, which alone he served as a Rabbi, that he was able to translate the training which he acquired here and his native gifts into a ministry rich in many blessings.

When he came to the faculty of the Hebrew Union College from Charleston, it was in recognition of the high abilities which he pos-

sessed and which he had exhibited as your beloved Rabbi. The achievements of Israel Bettan at our school matched and crowned his achievements in Charleston. I have known how much your congregation had come to love him. So do all of us here, and so did the entire Rabbinate. We shall all miss him sorely.

Nelson Glueck

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October 30, 1957

The Central Conference of American Rabbis would join itself with the congregation of the Virginia Street Temple in the Service of Memorial for Israel Bettan, our late President.

Israel Bettan was no cloistered scholar, removed from people's lives, divorced from their needs and aspirations. He served your congregation for a decade, bringing to you, as he did to his students and to us, his colleagues in the Conference, understanding, a quick sympathy, a saving wit and humor.

Israel Bettan was a dedicated Rabbi and a most distinguished scholar. But he could have been neither—if he were not first a simple human being who instinctively liked other human beings, who never separated himself from his fellows, who never withheld from anyone either the gifts of his mind or his heart.

So he is remembered in affection, as our teacher and as our leader, but above all else, as our understanding friend.

May his memory be for an everlasting blessing.

Jacob Philip Rudin

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November 1, 1957

With a heart full of sorrow and a mind crowded with memories, I join you and the members of Virginia Street Temple in saluting the memory of Dr. Israel Bettan.

It is indeed one of my claims to fame that I once had the privilege of standing in the pulpit which he honored with his presence. He was not only my predecessor; he was my teacher and his sudden departure was a wrench and a jolt not only for me but for the entire American Jewish community.

With wisdom and with consecration did he lead your congregation. With zeal and with infectious joy did he rear two generations of young men to become Rabbis. With erudition and eloquence he served as the president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. With loyalty and with love did he serve Almighty God and his children on earth.

It is now our task to prove how great was his influence upon us. We can do so by transmitting what we learned from Dr. Bettan to our children and to our neighbors. It is now our assignment to bear some of the burdens which death caused him to lay down. We can do this by giving fresh support to our sacred cause and to the temple which advances it.

I join you in praying for the peace of heart of Mrs. Bettan and her daughter. I join you in the supplication that God will always find us worthy of the gift of such dedicated spirits as Israel Bettan.

Maurice N. Eisendrath

## ISRAEL BETTAN — AN APPRECIATION

Israel Bettan arrived in Charleston in 1912, a young man of twenty-three. The previous five years he had studied at the Hebrew Union College, preparing himself for his ordination. He was born in Kovno, an important city of Lithuania. In the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, there is a biographical sketch in which it is said that that he had obtained his education before coming to this country in the yeshivas of Lithuania. These were undoubtedly the finest of their kind. In these yeshivas were preserved the soundest traditions of Jewish scholarship. Here was an atmosphere of fervent Jewish piety, of intense devotion to Jewish ideals, of avid intellectuality of the highest magnitude.

Israel Bettan could have been an Orthodox rabbi. He could have been a Conservative rabbi. He chose to be a Reform rabbi. There was something in the free, liberal, and tolerant spirit of Reform that appealed to him. But there was much in Orthodoxy that he likewise cherished. I think we may be glad that he was able to import into his rabbinical ministry some of the values of Orthodoxy he had learned to prize as a result of his yeshiva background and education. Orthodoxy has its strength as well as weakness, just as has Reform. The weakness of Orthodoxy is its rigidity; the weakness of Reform is its fluidity. The strength of Orthodoxy is its stability; the strength of Reform is its flexibility. In Israel Bettan the weakness of the one was a check on the weakness of the other, and the strengths of both were united in happy unison. It was this fine synthesis he had achieved that made him so valuable an influence in our movement. Thanks to him and a few others like him, we have been able to skirt the pitfalls which might have been our movement's undoing.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis has lost in him a wise, magnetic, and keen-witted leader. The Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion has lost in him a skillful teacher and erudite scholar. Congregation B'nai Israel has lost—Rabbi Bettan. For he was uniquely the Rabbi of this congregation even though many years removed from this pulpit. He never lost an opportunity in his classes to remind his students that the problems of the rabbinate were not foreign territory to him. He had once been Rabbi in Charleston, West Virginia. He used to speak affectionately, even nostalgically of his experiences as Rabbi. Any encounter with a member of this congregation whether in Cincinnati or New York, or wherever it might be, would set him off on a flood of eager reminiscences. He followed the careers of many of our people. If he heard one had a piece of luck, the news gave him personal satisfaction. If he heard one had a sorrow, it caused him a pang.

Once I met him on a train, traveling from Cincinnati east. I was in the company of a member of this congregation and he was travelling with Rabbi Sidney Regner, Executive Vice-President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. For four hours we sat together, and during

much of the time we heard him talk of bygone events in Charleston. Always he spoke in the kindest way. If he had ever had any dis-appointment as Rabbi in Charleston, he kept it a guarded secret.

The same warm feeling he showed towards the whole community of Charleston. He had served the community in a variety of different ways and rendered many an important contribution. But he never lost sight of the people in the cause he was serving. When he was here in February of 1955 to address a joint meeting of our Sisterhood and Brotherhood, I walked with him on a stroll through the streets of the city. Scarcely a contemporary who passed us by but recognized him and broke into a smile, responding to Rabbi Bettan's smile as they greeted one another. He was friendly towards all men. Often he quoted the Roman writer, 'nothing human is alien to me.' I believe he tried always to live in the spirit of that maxim.

I recall having met him in a theatre in New York. I was sitting not very far away from him. A kindly lady saw us saying hello and offered me her seat in exchange for mine, so that we might be next to one another. It was one of those sickly, decadent plays, of which there have been so many, seemingly, in recent years. When it was over, we couldn't get out of the theatre fast enough to escape the unhealthy phantoms which had gripped our attention the past two or three hours. The sun was still shining, and it was a lovely afternoon. I saw Israel Bettan take a deep breath as if to cleanse himself of the unwholesome influences we had absorbed. His comment was brief but memorable: 'O for the plays of Shakespeare! In these too there are depths that are dark, grim and forbidding, but there are heights. *Here* are only the depths! Where are the heights? Where are the heights?' How like Bettan always to be looking for the positive, noble, inspiring heights of life!

I believe that because he fixed his gaze habitually on the heights of life he was able to console himself for the absence of many of the elegances we all crave for ourselves as our rightful twentieth-century American heritage. Now, he too, enjoyed good things: good food, good clothing, a pleasant place in which to live, but he counted books, music, friends, ideals among the desirable things of life. You remember his saying when he was here last that he wanted not so much to grow old graciously, he wanted to live graciously. O the wonderful, exalted, sublime heights of life!

We shall always be grateful for the kind of man he was, the kind of scholar, teacher, leader, friend.

Our hearts go out in deepest sympathy to his grieving wife, Ida, and their daughter, Anita. We pray that God may be with them for comfort and healing, and permit them to rejoice in the tender and loving recollections of their dear one, in the proud consciousness of the valuable work he did, the pure life he lived, the high place he occupied in the esteem and affection of friends and colleagues. May the memory of Israel Bettan be to them and to all of us an abiding benediction. Amen.